

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 1370

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJ: JEWISH AGENCY FEUDS WITH MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION-
ABSORPTION ON EVE OF WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS

REF: TEL AVIV 854

1. SUMMARY: WITH THE APPROACH OF THE 29TH WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS, SCHEDULED FEB 20-28 IN JERUSALEM, THE PUBLIC POLEMIC OVER THE FUTURE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY (JA) AND THE MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION IS HEATING UP. SINCE THE FUTURE STATUS OF DAVID LEVY'S (HERUT) CABINET POSITION WILL DEPEND ON THE OUTCOME OF THIS STRUGGLE AND SINCE THE NEXT CHAIRMAN OF THE JEWISH AGENCY-WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION, ARYEH DULZIN OF THE LIBERAL PARTY FACTION OF LIKUD, DEMANDS THE ABOLITION OF THE MINISTRY, THE RESOLUTION OF THIS ISSUE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY FURTHER EXACERBATE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE LIBERALS AND HERUT, ALREADY STRAINED OVER DIFFERENCES ON SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND FOREIGN POLICY. THE ISSUE IS COMPOUNDED BY THE VESTED INTEREST IN THE JEWISH AGENCY OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO ASSERT ITSELF STRONGLY AT THE WZO CONGRESS. PREMIER BEGIN WILL BE CAUGHT RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CONTROVERSY. END SUMMARY
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2. IN THE LAST FEW DAYS JEWISH AGENCY LEADERS REPRESENTING LIKUD, ALIGNMENT, AND NRP HAVE BEEN SHARPLY ATTACKING IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION MINISTER LEVY FOR HAVING GONE TO THE U.S. ON WHAT THEY CONSIDER A USELESS TRIP AND FOR HAVING UNILATERALLY COMMITTED THE GOI TO A COSTLY AND INEQUITABLE PROGRAM FOR BRINGING BACK ISRAELIS WHO HAVE EMIGRATED ABROAD (YORDIM) BY OFFERING THEM THE

SAME TAX AND SUBSIDY BENEFITS GRANTED TO NEW IMMIGRANTS. DULZIN AS TREASURER AND NEXT CHAIRMAN OF THE JA-WZO HAS PUBLICLY REITERATED HIS DEMAND FOR ABOLITION OF THE IMMIGRATION MINISTRY, CLAIMING THAT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAD MADE A COMMITMENT TO THIS EFFECT TO LIKUD. OUTGOING JA CHAIRMAN YOSEPH ALMOGI (ALIGHMENT) AND RABBI KIRSCHBLUM (NRP), CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE JA-ALIYA DEPARTMENT, HAVE ALSO ATTACKED THE GOVERNMENT AND LEVY FOR WASTING AND DUPLICATING RESOURCES AND SERVICES TO "ESTABLISH FACTS AND WREST CONTROL OVER ALIYA AND THE RETURN OF YORDIM FROM THE AGENCY," REINFORCING THE ATTACK, OPPOSITION LEADER PERES HAS CALLED FOR A KNESSET DEBATE ON LEVY'S TRIP.

3. THE CONTROVERSY CENTERS PRINCIPALLY AROUND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A REPORT BY GENERAL AMOS HOREV WHICH CALLS FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION AND OF THE JEWISH AGENCY ABSORPTION DEPARTMENT. BOTH ARE TO BE REPLACED BY A JOINT JA-WZO-GOI IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION AUTHORITY PLUS A COUNCIL FOR IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION TO BE HEADED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND CONSISTING OF CABINET MEMBERS, THE JA-WZO CHAIRMAN, PLUS SENIOR JA-WZO OFFICIALS. FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION WOULD CONTINUE TO REMAIN UNDER JA JURISDICTION. UNDER THIS PLAN LEVY WOULD BECOME CHAIRMAN OF THE NEW AUTHORITY, BUT WILL HAVE TO ABANDON HIS CABINET POSITION WHICH HE ADAMANTLY REFUSES TO DO. DULZIN PROPOSED AS COMPROMISE TO MAKE LEVY MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO, BUT THIS TOO HAS BEEN REJECTED. LEVY, IN TURN, WANTS TO LIMIT THE ROLE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY TO IMMIGRATION
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PROCESSING UP TO THE POINT OF ARRIVAL, BUT HAVE THE GOI ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INTEGRATION-ABSORPTION OF IMMIGRANTS, A PROPOSAL REJECTED BY JA. HE HAS MOBILIZED STRONG HERUT AS WELL AS SOME DMC SUPPORT FOR HIS PLAN.

4. LEVY, APPARENTLY REASSURED BY BEGIN OF KEEPING HIS MINISTRY, AD LEFT JAN 19 FOR A TWO WEEK TRIP TO THE U.S., CANADA, ENGLAND, AND AUSTRIA (REFTEL) NOTWITHSTANDING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD CALLED A MEETING OF JA-WZO AND MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION OF ABSORPTION REPRESENTATIVES JAN 30 TO DISCUSS THE HOREV REPORT. WITH THE DEBATE HEATING UP LEVY PRECIPITOUSLY CUT HIS TRIP SHORT AND HAS RETURNED TO ATTEND THE MEETING HIMSELF. ORIGINALLY HE HAD VIEWED THE MEETING MERELY AS ROUTINE AND HAD DESIGNATED HIS DIRECTOR GENERAL TO REPRESENT HIM, SAYING THAT IF THERE IS AN IMPASSE, THE WZO CONGRESS COULD DECIDE THE MATTER.

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5. BEGIN HIMSELF HAS BLOWN HOT AND COLD ON THIS ISSUE. HE SHARES WITH HERUT A STRONG PREJUDICE AGAINST THE AGENCY, (WHICH TRADITIONALLY HAD BEEN A LABOR PRESERVE) BUT IS AWARE OF ITS POLITICAL, HISTORICAL, AND FUND RAISING ROLE, AS WELL AS ITS FUNCTION AS AN IMPORTANT BRIDGE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES ABROAD, PARTICULARLY IN THE U.S. WHICH ALONE WILL SEND 30 PERCENT OF ALL WZO DELEGATES TO THE FEB CONGRESS. WHEN HE ENDORSED DULZIN'S CANDIDACY FOR THE JA-WZO CHAIRMANSHIP HE HAD PROMISED TO SUPPORT THE HOREV REPORT, AND HAD INDICATED THAT LEVY'S APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER WOULD BE REVIEWED AFTER THE WZO CONGRESS. SUBSEQUENTLY, HOWEVER, WHEN FACED WITH CONSIDERABLE PRESSURES FROM HERUT, BACKED IN THIS INSTANCE BY YIGAEI YADIN OF DMC, WHO IS OPPOSED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF RELYING ON CHARITY FOR BUILDING ISRAEL, BEGIN DENIED A FIRM COMMITMENT TO DULZIN AND PROMISED THAT LEVY WOULD REMAIN IN THE CABINET. HE WAS THEN IMMEDIATELY BESIEGED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY WHICH BY A STRONG MAJORITY SUPPORTS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOREV REPORT. IN RECENT WEEKS BEGIN HAS BEEN ABLE TO PERSUADE AMERICANS TO BE PATIENT, CLAIMING THAT HE HAD TO KEEP HERUT IN LINE WHILE HE WAS ENGAGED IN VITAL PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT.

6. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO ACTING JA DIRECTOR GENERAL ROSEN, THIS
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ARGUMENT SEEMS TO BE LOSING EFFECTIVENESS. MAX FISHER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF UJA, IS COMING TO ISRAEL TO ATTEND THE MEETING ON THE HOREV REPORT AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO BACK DULZIN.

7. DULZIN FEARS THAT IF THE JA LOSES ITS ABSORPTION PORTFOLIO TO LEVY'S MINISTRY, IT MAY BE REDUCED PRINCIPALLY TO RAISING FUNDS

FOR CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND WELFARE PROJECTS IN COMPETITION WITH OTHER JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS. ONCE THE GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION, FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE COULD LOSE THEIR TAX-EXEMPTION ABROAD. THIS WOULD CONSIDERABLY REDUCE ITS FUND RAISING ABILITY, WHICH, IN ANY CASE IS ON THE DECLINE, (SEVEN MILLION DOLLARS LESS IN 1977 THAN IN 1976), LEAD TO A REDUCTION OF THE AGENCY'S INSTITUTIONAL IMPORTANCE AND STAFFING (POLITICAL PATRONAGE), AND UPSET THE AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS CLOSELY LINKED WITH JA.

8. COMMENT: BEGIN IS ACKWARDLY CAUGHT UP IN THIS AS IN MANY OTHER INTRA-PARTY CONTROVERSIES FROM WHICH HIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN DIVERTED BY HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. HOWEVER, HE WILL HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION BEFORE THE ZIONIST CONGRESS AT WHICH THIS QUESTION IS BOUND TO BECOME A MAJOR TOPIC. SINCE LIKUD IS BADLY DIVIDED ON THIS ISSUE AND SINCE LABOR WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BACK THE HOREV REPORT, BEGIN WILL HAVE TO TREAD CAREFULLY AND WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO IMPOSE A MINORITY POSITION. DOWNGRADING LEVY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY SHARPEN THE HERUT-LIBERAL CONFLICT AND REINFORCE HERUT RESENTMENT THAT PT HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED FROM ANY POLICY MAKING POSITION IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERE, AS ALREADY INDICATED BY THE RESIGNATION OF TWO HERUT MKS FROM THE KNESSET LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF PARTY DISCIPLINE BREACHES BY LIKUD MKS VOTING ON SOCIAL-LABOR LEGISLATION.

9. THE HERUT-LIBERAL CONFLICT WILL FURTHER COMPLICATE THE
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SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR KEY WZO AND JEWISH AGENCY DEPARTMENT HEADS, WHICH BY PRIOR AGREEMENT INVOLVING THE UNOPPOSED CANDIDACY OF DULZIN IS TO BE APPORTIONED AMONG THE MAJOR PARTIES. HOWEVER, HERUT IS INSISTING ON FILLING THE JA TREASURY SLOT ALREADY PROMISED TO LABOR. THESE CONTROVERSIES WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY ALSO BE FUELED BY THE WZO CONGRESS DEBATES OF THE SETTLEMENT ISSUES, IN WHICH THE AMERICAN DELEGATES MAY SEEK TO ASSERT THEIR INFLUENCE. THIS, IN TURN, WILL THEN REVIVE THE PERENNIAL ARGUMENT ABOUT THE RIGHT OF OUTSIDERS TO DETERMINE THE PRIORITIES AND POLICIES OF THE JEWS IN ISRAEL, A NAGGING QUESTION CLOSELY LINKED TO THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE JEWISH AGENCY AND ISRAEL'S RELIANCE ON JEWISH FUND RAISING ABROAD.
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